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U.S. REMEMBERS SEPTEMBER 11 THROUGH MEMORIAL LIGHTS, FREEDOM WALKS

Nation commemorates fifth anniversary of
September 11 terrorist attacks

By Howard Cincotta
Washington File Special Correspondent

Washington -- In communities across the United States, Americans are joining together to mark the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in which more than 3,000 Americans and citizens of other countries lost their lives.

The September 11 ceremonies are large and small, official and informal, and range from a televised presidential address scheduled for the evening of September 11 to concerts, interfaith religious services and a variety of local observances taking place in all 50 states as well as around the world.

In a proclamation declaring "National Days of Prayer and Remembrance," President Bush said, "As we pray for the families of the victims and reflect upon that defining moment in our history, we are inspired by the knowledge that from the pain and sorrow of that September morning rose a Nation united by our love freedom. We remember that we are a people determined to defend our way of life and to care for our neighbors in need."

For many Americans, remembrance of September 11 may involve a simple walk. In cities and communities throughout the country, thousands of Americans

are participating in Freedom Walks to mark the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attacks. Many of the walks are sponsored by "America Supports You," a nationwide program sponsored by the Department of Defense, which seeks to engage thousands of communities, organizations, companies and individuals in support the armed forces and war against terrorism.

Estimates say more than 120 Freedom Walks are taking place, which began with a group of 30 who gathered on September 7 in White Sands, New Mexico. One of the largest took place in Washington on September 10, when several thousand participants walked two miles from the Washington Monument across the Potomac River to the Pentagon.

But other walks are much smaller and low key, and often involve a quiet, meditative walk around a local school or landmark -- whether the Wetumpka Intermediate School in Alabama; Veteran's Park in Tulsa, Oklahoma; or Sand Fork Elementary School in West Virginia. Some of the Freedom Walks feature music performances, releases of balloons or doves of peace and candle-lighting ceremonies.

But other scheduled September 11 community ceremonies are even more varied, as in this sampling of events taken from a listing compiled by the organization, Families of September 11:

-- More than 100 bicyclists will ride 272 miles from Ground Zero in New York City, site of the Twin Towers, to the Pentagon outside Washington.

-- In California, the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance will conduct a memorial service and candle-lighting, following by screening of the film "World Trade Center."

-- A senior center in Baltimore, Maryland, will hold a special commemorative blood drive.

-- Minneapolis, Minnesota, will hold special September 11 memorial concerts along with dozens of other cities and communities.

-- Reno, Nevada, will be the site of Joe McNally's photo display "Faces of Ground Zero," using the world's largest Polaroid camera. His images toured major cities of the world in 2002 and were viewed by more than 2 million people.

-- New September 11 memorials will be unveiled in both Bayonne and Bergen County, New Jersey, a state hard hit by the terrorist attacks.

-- A "United in Memory 9/11 Victim's Memorial Quilt" will be on display in Radnor, Pennsylvania, as well as a "Heart of America Quilt" on the National Mall in Washington.

-- The volunteer organization, One Day's Pay, is campaigning to establish 9/11 as a voluntary day of service, charity and compassion. They are calling on Americans to perform at least one good deed of their own choosing in observance of the fifth anniversary of September 11.

Pillars of light also will pierce the night skies to commemorate September 11. In Washington, the Defense Department will beam a white memorial light skyward from dusk to dawn on September 10 and 11. New York City is beaming its "Tribute in Light" from lower Manhattan, site of the World Trade Center, "in memory of those lost and as a symbol of the spirit of our community."

Among the other ceremonies scheduled for New York City will be a ceremony featured the reading of the names of the victims by friends and family members, along with four moments of silence: one each for the moment the two planes struck the Twin Towers, and one each for the moment that the South Tower fell, followed by the North Tower.

President Bush will address the nation in a televised address on the evening of September 11.

Remembrances are not limited to the annual September 11 observances, of course. In an article, "The Architecture of Loss," Washington Post writer Glenn Frankel describes the many and varied memorials that have appeared or are planned across the nation. They range from the memorial entitled "Reflecting Absence" that will occupy the footprint of the downed World Trade Center, to a grove of trees in Massachusetts -- one for each victim aboard the two flights that took off from Boston. There is also a kidney-dialysis wing in a hospital in Ethiopia named for Yeneneh Betru, a medical specialist aboard the flight that struck the Pentagon, and an album from New Jersey-born rocker Bruce Springsteen called "The Rising."

On the Internet, according to one count by the Library of Congress, there are more than 2,700 memorial sites.

"There's a certain sense in which no memorial can ever capture the depth of pain the people experience," psychiatrist and writer Robert Jay Lifton said in Frankel's article. Governments and public institutions struggle to deal with divisive issues, Lifton said, and it's left to individuals to pay homage to their loved ones.

U.S. HAS MULTIPRONGED STRATEGY TO FIGHT TERRORISM, OFFICIAL SAYS

Homeland security adviser cites alliances, integration of intelligence agencies

The following piece was originally published in the September 10 edition of the New York Times as part of a collection of essays on counterterrorism efforts. The item is in the public domain; there are no republication restrictions. The author is the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

(begin byliner)

The President's Plan

By Frances Fragos Townsend

Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism

As a result of the horror of Sept. 11, 2001, President Bush has transformed the way we fight terrorism and the tools we use. We successfully attack those very things our enemies need to operate and survive: leadership, communications, the ability to travel, weapons; foot soldiers and financing. The president has strengthened and transformed the intelligence community, integrated our military and intelligence assets, and broken down the barriers that kept domestic law enforcement and intelligence agencies from sharing information.

The United States has enhanced relationships with allies around the world, recognizing that this is truly a global war on terrorism. Working together, we have denied Al Qaeda the safe havens and resources it needs to plan and carry out attacks and made it more difficult for our enemies to travel. We use their communications against them and have cut off their money.

At home, the president has transformed the fight by creating the Department of Homeland Security and by ensuring that the F.B.I. had the necessary tools, like the Patriot Act, to get the job done. The airline bombing plot disrupted by our British allies this summer is only the most recent case of brutal terrorists continuing to plan mass murder. We must be right 100 percent of the time; the terrorists have to succeed only once. On Sept. 11, 2001, each of us became soldiers in this fight to protect freedom. We're in a war we didn't ask for, but it's a war we must wage and a war we will win.

(end byliner)

IRAQI FREEDOM VITAL TO DEFEATING TERRORISM, RICE DECLARES

Cheney, Rice cite progress in War on Terror in television interviews

By Howard Cincotta
Washington File Special Correspondent

Washington -- Saddam Hussein represented a nexus between terrorism and violence that would have made progress toward a better future for the Middle East and the world difficult to imagine if he had remained in power, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in a series of television news interviews on September 10, the eve of the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

From the perspective of the past five years, Rice said, the United States and its allies have made major progress in the War on Terror. She cited the capture or killing of many central al Qaida figures such as Abu Zubaydah and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who plotted and executed the September 11 attacks; the liberation of more than 50 million people in Afghanistan and Iraq; and the gains in intelligence-gathering and cooperation with nations around the world.

Along with making the United States itself more secure, Rice said on Fox News Sunday, "I think that the record will show that the last five years have been years of reorganizing our international alliances for this long war and reorienting our strategic policy toward one that simply will not accept the conditions in the Middle East and in other places that have allowed extremism to flourish at the expense of moderation."

Appearing in an hour-long interview on NBC's Meet the Press, Vice President Dick Cheney said that, despite an evolving threat from terrorist groups only loosely affiliated with a central al Qaida organization, the United States and its allies have taken enormous strides in the terrorism fight.

As examples, Cheney cited the terrorist surveillance program, which he said had identified "key communications involving our adversaries," as well as efforts to track and shut down terrorist financing. He also cited the detainee program, "which has allowed us to collect some extraordinarily valuable intelligence from the terrorists we capture."

"It's all been done in a manner that's consistent with the president's authorities, with the Constitution, and with our treaty obligations," Cheney added.

Cheney said the hunt for terrorist leader Osama bin Laden continues to be active and aggressive, and he praised the courage of President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan as a valuable ally in the fight against terrorism. "The fact is, we've captured and killed more al Qaida in Pakistan than anyplace else in the world in the last five years," he said.

Although the Taliban continue to operate in parts of Afghanistan, Rice said on Fox News Sunday, they do not pose any kind of "strategic threat" to the Karzai government. The Taliban may have believed that they could take advantage of the changeover from U.S. to NATO troops in southern Afghanistan. "And they're learning a very brutal lesson as they encounter NATO forces that are destroying them in very large numbers," she said.

IRAQ

In all her interviews, Rice stressed that critics underestimate the threat that Saddam Hussein represented while in power. Saddam Hussein was responsible for more than a million casualties in the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, invaded Kuwait and triggered the Gulf War in 1991, defied U.N. sanctions and the Oil for Food embargo, attacked U.S. planes enforcing no-fly zones, was responsible for as many as 300,000 deaths of his own citizens and remained a state sponsor of terrorism, she said.

Although no weapons of mass destruction were found after Saddam Hussein's overthrow in 2003, subsequent international reports found that he retained the capability and intention of reconstituting his chemical and biological weapons once U.N. sanctions were lifted, according to Rice.

“The idea that somehow this was a peaceful relationship with Saddam Hussein, and if we had just let him be, the world would have been fine, I find is not a very sustainable argument,” she said on CBS’s Face the Nation.

On CNN’s Late Edition, Rice described Iraq under Saddam Hussein as a nexus of threats from “in a post-September 11 world ... in the middle of the world’s most volatile region. The world is better off without him,” she said.

Vice President Cheney said on NBC’s Meet the Press that the U.S. objective in Iraq is to see the establishment of a nation with a viable, representative government elected under its own constitution that is no longer a threat to its neighbors or the United States, nor a safe haven for terrorists, including al Qaida cells. “Those are all things that need to happen, but I think we’re well on the way to doing it,” he said, “and we’re better off there because of what we’ve done to date.”

Rice noted on CNN’s Late Edition that Iraqis continue to work toward a government of national unity where differences are worked out through political institutions, not violence. Iraqi leaders have had success in building a national army that is respected across Iraq, she said, but less success with sectarian divisions within the police force.

“Violent people can always engage in kidnappings or killings or suicide bombings,” she said. “What’s harder to show is the commitment of most Iraqis to finding a political bargain that will allow them to exist as one country. That’s what they want. That’s what they’re working toward. And we are expressing confidence in them as they seek that future.”

IRAN

With regard to Iran, Rice said on CNN’s Late Edition that the United States is working to build a coalition of states, “all of whom know that Iranian nuclear activities are unexplained and troubling.” Since Iran has not accepted the incentives packages that would have permitted civil nuclear cooperation, she continued, “I’m quite certain ... that the world will respond as the Security Council resolution demands.”

Asked about the nature of possible sanctions, Rice dismissed speculation about Iran’s oil exports and suggested that the focus might be more toward reducing or cutting off Iran’s access to the international financial system.

On Meet the Press, Cheney said that there is little dispute in the international community that Iran is pursuing the capability for production of nuclear weapons. “We have said repeatedly that they should not have a nuclear bomb. and we have also made it abundantly clear that we want to solve the problem diplomatically.”

TORTURE OF DETAINEES “ABSOLUTELY BANNED” SAYS STATE OFFICIAL

Military tribunals necessary to bring terrorists to justice, legal adviser says

By Michelle Austein
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The use of torture and the use of evidence derived from torture is “absolutely banned” in the Bush administration’s proposed procedures for military commissions trying detainees at the Guantanamo Bay base in Cuba, John Bellinger, the State Department’s legal adviser said September 7.

At a briefing in Washington, Bellinger said that under the proposed legislation, information derived from torture as defined by both international and domestic law cannot be used in trials. “It would be up to the judge to determine based on an argument by the accused whether he believed that something were torture and needed to be prohibited,” Bellinger said.

On September 6, President Bush announced that he sent legislation to Congress that specifically would authorize U.S. military commissions to try captured terrorist suspects and would clarify the rules governing how U.S. interrogators may question detainees to gather intelligence against terrorist organizations and prevent potential terrorist activities.

The president also announced that 14 high-level al-Qaida members were transferred from CIA facilities to the Department of Defense's detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where they will await trial by U.S. military commissions. Those 14 high-level al-Qaida members transferred to Guantanamo will have access to lawyers, Bellinger said.

The legislation, if passed by Congress, would address all the concerns raised by the Supreme Court in its June 29 decision ruling that Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions applies to the U.S. war with the al-Qaida group, Bellinger said. "We need Congress to pass that legislation so that we can move forward and begin to bring people to justice," he said.

After September 11, 2001, Bellinger said, "there were numerous rules on the books that were available to treat past wars and people in past wars ... but that there are not clearly existing rules either domestically or internationally" that apply to individuals detained as part of the War on Terror.

"A system needs to be designed in which those who had been conspiring to commit attacks on the United States or elsewhere around the world can be tried in a fair system for their crimes," he said.

The Bush administration draft legislation calls for trials to be open except in certain limited circumstances that allow the accused to be excluded if presenting the evidence to him or her would compromise national security. In such a situation, a member of the president's Cabinet would have to certify that this exception is essential to national security. Then, the judge presiding over the case would determine whether there is a way in which the evidence can be presented that would not compromise national security. The judge also would have to determine if exclusion of the defendant from trial during presentation of that evidence would interfere with the accused person's right to a full and fair trial.

Also on September 6, the Defense Department released a new field manual that specifies treatment and interrogation procedures for all detainees under the department's custody worldwide.

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